

additional term in the office to maintain institutional continuity and to “prevent the loss of critical organizational knowledge” within the office.

This bill is a commonsense adjustment of current law, and I recommend my colleagues support the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3571.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE GUARD CONTRACTING REFORM ACT OF 2007

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3068) to prohibit the award of contracts to provide guard services under the contract security guard program of the Federal Protective Service to a business concern that is owned, controlled, or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3068

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE CONTRACTS.

(a) *PROHIBITION ON AWARD OF CONTRACTS TO ANY BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED, CONTROLLED, OR OPERATED BY AN INDIVIDUAL CONVICTED OF A FELONY.*—The Secretary of Homeland Security may not award a contract for the provision of guard services under the contract security guard program of the Federal Protective Service to any business concern that is owned, controlled, or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony.

(b) *REGULATIONS.*—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue regulations to carry out this section.

(c) *IMPLEMENTATION.*—In this section, the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security acting through the Assistant Secretary of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that

all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3068.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I would like to note that I am here for the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and if she does come in, I will relinquish my duties.

But in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this bill, H.R. 3068, as amended, is the result of two oversight hearings held by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that examined the role of Federal Protective Service, FPS, in providing security for our Nation's public buildings. There was evidence of serious allegations of wrongdoing, chaos, and irregularities in contracting employment of private security guards who protect Federal employees and facilities.

This legislation intends to preserve the security of the country's most sensitive buildings. Due to the security needs of a Federal building, it is surprising that an individual with a felony conviction would hold a contract for security services in a Federal building.

This bill codifies the commonsense approach to providing security for Federal buildings. Specifically, this bill directs the Secretary of Homeland Security not to award any security guard contracts through the Federal Protective Service to any company that is owned, controlled, or operated by a convicted felon. The bill would ensure that contractors are capable, responsible and ethical as required by the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

Contract security officers are a critical component of Federal strategies to protect the safety and security of Federal employees, visitors to Federal buildings and the surrounding community. Given the critical role these guards play in Federal security, this bill will hold owners of companies who provide security to Federal buildings to the highest standards. I urge all Members to vote for H.R. 3068, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I don't have any other speakers and I am going to talk about the bill, but I know it is Ms. NORTON's bill and she may want to say something before I do. I would reserve the balance of my time and would like to speak after her if that is all right.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. I ask unanimous consent to relinquish control of the time to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri, and particularly thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania in my absence for assuming the responsibility because I was at a hearing on Blackwater.

H.R. 3068, as amended, the Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act of 2007, ensures that Federal Protective Service guard contractors are “capable, responsible, and ethical,” and those are the words of the regulation. I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for facilitating early consideration of this bill, and for the leadership on both sides, including the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Ranking Member GRAVES for understanding its importance and for their efforts in support of the bill.

The Federal Protective Service Guard Contracting Reform Act prohibits the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security from contracting with any security guard service that is owned, controlled or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony. The bill would eliminate proxy operation by felons who are relatives, spouses or others.

H.R. 3068, as amended, is a result of two oversight hearings Mr. GRAVES and I held that examined the role of the Federal Protective Service in providing security for the Nation's public buildings. There was evidence of serious allegations of wrongdoing, chaos and irregularities in the contracting and employment of private security guards whose mission it is to protect Federal employees and facilities.

Our subcommittee worked closely with appropriate Department of Homeland Security officials to eliminate the backlog in payments to guards and to correct FPS mismanagement that risked the security of Federal employees and visitors. FPS guards, like guards employed by the Federal Government, these security guards are used on our most sensitive buildings, including here in the Nation's Capital and the National Capital region where your most secure facilities are located.

Therefore, it was surprising to learn that an individual with a felony conviction would hold a contract for security services in a Federal building, especially here, but frankly anywhere in the United States in the post-9/11 climate.

It was clear that this bill was necessary when our subcommittee learned at a hearing in June that an FPS security guard contractor had failed to pay 600 D.C. area Federal security officers and to make other important benefit payments to pensions, health benefits and the like. Our subcommittee intervened when an action by the FPS and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a division of DHS where FPS is placed, was reported to us.

The effects on the security of employees, visitors and the Federal agencies alike could not be ignored in today's post-9/11 climate.

We are indebted to the contract security officers who continue to work to protect Federal workers, the visiting public and the work sites, as well as to their unions. As a result of the subcommittee's June hearing, we learned that an individual who had served 5 years in prison for money laundering and fraud was a de facto owner of a private security business despite Federal law barring felons from owning companies that do business with the Federal Government. In fact, it was the felon, not his wife, who came forward to defend the company after it failed to pay the 600 D.C.-based guards despite receipt of funds for payment from the FPS. His testimony concerning his operational control of the company was nothing short of a case study in evasion of existing law by taking advantage of obvious loopholes.

□ 1330

His company has, of course, since been dismissed. H.R. 3068, as amended, strengthens existing requirements and prohibits all proxy ownerships by felons, including control or operation by an individual who has been convicted of a felony.

H.R. 3068, as amended, reminds us that we must not lose sight of the mission of private contract guards who serve the Federal Government to guard Federal employees and sites as vital as nuclear plants and military posts against terrorism and crime. The example of unpaid contract guards and apparent misuse of Federal funds that had been directed to pay them demonstrated why these contractors must be required to have a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics. H.R. 3068, as amended, codifies this important requirement.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3068, introduced by Subcommittee Chairwoman NORTON, adds an additional level of security to our Federal buildings by prohibiting the Federal Protective Services from awarding contracts to convicted felons.

I would like to commend Chairwoman NORTON for her commitment to the security of Federal buildings, government employees and visitors. She probably has more than anybody else in the House.

The protection of the employees and visitors at Federal buildings remains a high priority. This legislation will increase the standards of safety and security for Federal properties across this country.

The Federal Protective Service serves as one of the first lines of defense for our Federal buildings. We entrust the security of Federal court-

houses and buildings and their employees and visitors to FPS personnel. From day-to-day security screening, to protection from riots and terrorist attacks, the FPS force plays a vital role in facilitating the work of the Federal Government.

The Federal Protective Service employs more than 1,000 trained employees and more than 15,000 contract security guards. H.R. 3068 prohibits FPS from contracting with security firms that are owned or operated by convicted felons. It's a very simple measure. The security of Federal buildings must be managed by those that have the best interests of the American people in mind.

This legislation will ensure the integrity of the forces protecting our Federal buildings, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3068.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a fantastic idea, and again, I want to applaud Chairwoman NORTON for the work that she's done on this, again, to push it through.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his kind words to me and for his work with me on the committee.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3068. This bill represents an important step in ensuring the safety of Federal employees and all those who work in and visit our Federal buildings.

I thank the Delegate of the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), chair of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, for bringing this issue to the attention of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and for quickly developing and advancing, in a bipartisan manner, a remedy.

On April 18, 2007, the committee held a hearing entitled "Proposals to Downsize the Federal Protective Service and Effects on the Protection of Federal Buildings". The hearing probed the Department of Homeland Security's plans to cut the presence of Federal Protective Service, FPS, officers nationally. The reliance on contract security guards to protect Federal buildings is a troubling trend.

H.R. 3068 prohibits the award of contracts to provide guard services under the contract security guard program of the FPS to any business that is owned, controlled, or operated by an individual who has been convicted of a felony. The bill directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to promulgate regulations within 6 months to implement the provisions of this act.

This bill offers a common sense way to ensure that security contracts that provide an essential service are awarded only to contractors who are "capable, responsible, and ethical" as required by the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

I support this bill and urge its passage.

Ms. NORTON. I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3068, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 33 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1500

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. JONES of Ohio) at 3 p.m.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 200) expressing the sense of Congress regarding the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 200

Whereas on August 15, 2007, Burma's ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), cancelled fuel subsidies resulting in the quintupling of the price of fuel which had an immediate and damaging impact on the living conditions of the Burmese people and Burma's already devastated economy;

Whereas on August 19, 2007, in reaction to this crippling measure, prominent student and democracy leaders peacefully took to the streets in Rangoon and elsewhere to protest the draconian action of the military junta in Rangoon; during the subsequent weeks, protests continued in Rangoon, and spread to other cities and towns throughout Burma, including Mandalay, Sittwe, Pakokku, Tounggok, Yehangyaung;

Whereas the growing numbers of protestors peacefully demanded democratic reforms and the release of 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience;

Whereas Buddhist monks actively participated and increasingly led these peaceful demonstrations, culminating in an estimated 100,000 people marching through Rangoon on September 24, 2007; in response to this largest protest since the 1988 demonstrations which were brutally crushed by the Burmese military by firing on unarmed civilians, the Burmese regime threatened to "take action", indicating the junta's willingness to significantly increase the level of violence used against the Burmese people;

Whereas on September 25, 2007, the Burmese junta imposed a 60-day (9pm-5am) curfew and a ban on gatherings of more than